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SUBJECT: DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTER VISIT HIGHLIGHTS
NEED FOR CLOSER LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION

REFTELS: (A) PARAMARIBO 689 (B) PARAMARIBO 198

1. (U) Summary. Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot paid an official visit to Suriname on October 21 to discuss the future of bilateral relations and prepare for a visit by Dutch Prime Minister Jan Balkenende next month. Bot and his Surinamese counterparts discussed expanding law enforcement cooperation between Suriname, Colombia, and the Netherlands; ending a treaty governing treatment of Dutch nationals of Surinamese origin; 100% controls at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport; and the general process of moving towards a less "emotional" bilateral relationship. End Summary.

2. (U) During his short visit, Bot met with newly installed Surinamese Minister of Foreign Affairs Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk and paid courtesy calls on recently reelected President Ronald Venetiaan and his Vice-President Ramdien Sardjoe. Bot's stay was in advance of Prime Minister Balkenende's upcoming attendance at Suriname's 30th anniversary of independence on November 25. Balkenende's visit to Suriname will be the first by a Dutch prime minister since independence in 1975.

3. (SBU) During his visit, Bot said that Suriname, Colombia, and the Netherlands need to collaborate more closely in combating drug trafficking. He included the U.S. in this in off the cuff remarks during an evening address at the Lim A Po academic institute. Transit countries, like Suriname and the Netherlands, cannot handle the problem alone, making closer law enforcement cooperation with source countries, such as Colombia, necessary. He met with Minister of Justice and Police Chandrikerpersad Santokhi to discuss this broader collaboration and mentioned that he spoke with U.S. Ambassador Wood and Colombian officials on the issue during his recent trip to Bogota. He also said that other European Union (EU) countries were closely watching Dutch efforts to combat narcotics trafficking. Bot explained that his country lies on a geographic pivot point, making it very accessible to criminal organizations and a transit country for drugs to the rest of Europe.

4. (U) Bot linked this EU pressure with the need to continue 100% controls on passengers arriving directly into Schiphol from Suriname, Aruba, and the Dutch Antilles. The controls continue to be a diplomatic sore spot between Suriname and the Netherlands. During a press conference, Kraag Keteldijk emphasized the unpleasantness of the controls. Bot said that for the moment there are no plans to end it and that even Dutch officials returning from Suriname are subject to it.

5. (SBU) A "Separation Agreement" signed by both sides when Suriname became independent was also a hot topic. The agreement governs how Dutch citizens of Surinamese origin should be treated upon their return to Suriname. The agreement has been controversial and even led to a lawsuit against the State. Kraag-Keteldijk said the agreement is no longer relevant 30 years after independence and that she would like to bring an end to it. Bot was more equivocal. He promised to send a delegation to Suriname before the end of 2005 to discuss the matter, which he said was legally complex. According to the Dutch Embassy, ending the agreement would be politically unpopular with the 350,000 Dutch of Surinamese origin currently living in the Netherlands.

6. (U) In a discussion at the Lim A Po institute, Bot warned that Dutch-Surinamese relations will be affected by further Dutch integration into the EU because Dutch decisions and regulations will often be governed by Brussels. He also stated that his government would like to expand relations with Suriname, but would like these relations to be less emotional and more business-like. He said he wants "more telephone rather than megaphone" diplomacy, but still considers the countries' common language, culture, history, and people significant.

17. (U) In order to reduce poverty, Bot urged Suriname to improve its investment climate for foreign investors and spur domestic private sector growth. Responding to a question about Suriname's banana access to the EU market, he

said he had been involved in the early negotiations and that Suriname had lost out because it waited too long to make a decision, presumably referring to a banana export licensing deal where a company ended up with what should have been Suriname's license. He praised Suriname for contributing towards the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market Economy as the organization's recent chair. He also mentioned the opportunities opening up for Suriname from a planned road system extending through the Amazon region, from having Surinamer Albert Ramdin as the Deputy Secretary of the Organization of American States (OAS) and from Suriname's good relations with Brazil, China, Indonesia and India. He also encouraged Suriname to tap into Surinamese academics living in the Netherlands to help develop the country.

18. (SBU) Contacts at the Dutch Embassy felt the visit went very well and Bot was able to discuss all of his agenda points. Same day protests organized by former military dictator and convicted narcotics trafficker Desi Bouterse against President Venetiaan's government did little to disrupt Bot's visit, but it did push it out of the lead story on local TV news. (See reftel A).

COMMENT

19. (SBU) The Dutch interest in expanding law enforcement cooperation with Suriname and Colombia is a welcome development. Dutch assistance in this realm has produced real results in Suriname, including the March arrest of the leader of major drug trafficking and money laundering ring. (See reftel B). Because of a shared language and legal system, the Netherlands is uniquely equipped to provide close support to Surinamese police and prosecutors. The 100% controls at Schiphol have met success in deterring small-time cocaine mules traveling from Suriname, but to truly address the trafficking problem, the Dutch need to assist Suriname in deterring large cocaine shipments transported out of Suriname via commercial container vessels that end up in Dutch ports.

BARNES

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